



13 Dec 01

OUR TURN

Base closure deal deserves approval

It's time for Congress to bite the bullet and accept a proposed compromise setting up a new round of military base closures.

House Republican leaders have fought the Bush administration's attempt to eliminate some of the nation's outdated and unnecessary military bases. The Senate included base closures in its 2002 defense spending bill, but the House didn't.

The Pentagon estimates that 23 percent of the nation's 400 domestic military bases are no longer needed.

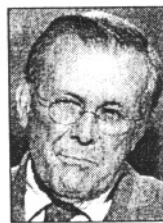
San Antonio knows too well the economic pain caused by base closures, but the expense of the war in Afghanistan demonstrates the need for the wise use of limited defense dollars.

The world is a dangerous place, and the threats to U.S. security are evolving into new forms. Defense spending needs to be analyzed and targeted at current dangers.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld set out on that mission when the Bush administration took office. He is bravely leading the charge for more base closures.

The compromise being considered would authorize another round of base closures but delay it until 2005. Although Bush wanted

Base closures hurt, but
Pentagon leaders from both
parties have said they are
necessary.



RUMSFELD

the closings to start in 2003, administration officials say they will accept the delay.

A veto threat from Bush has stalled the Senate-House conference committee on defense spending and forced the House to consider the base closure issue. Members of Congress shy away from base closings because of the political pain they cause at home.

San Antonio, which still has four military bases, and other communities will have plenty of time to gather information showing their bases are worth saving.

Those bases failing to meet that burden of proof must go for the good of the nation. And Congress needs to look at other pork-barrel defense spending as well, such as projects the Pentagon doesn't want but lawmakers approve year after year.

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Base closings logjam cleared

Cuts held to single round

BY CAROLYN SKORNECK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — After steadfastly holding out against base closings, House negotiators on the crucial \$343.3 billion defense authorization bill agreed Wednesday to a single round as demanded by President Bush.

The base-closings round wouldn't occur until 2005, two years later than the administration requested, under a compromise reached by leaders of the Senate and House armed services committees late last week to get the bill moving and erase the possibility of a Bush veto.

The issue caused a monthlong standoff between House and Senate negotiators trying to reconcile their versions of the defense authorization bill for fiscal 2002, which began Oct. 1.

The overall defense bill agreed to Wednesday by House negotiators, and Tuesday by their Senate counterparts, contains many programs of importance to the military.

They include minimum 5 percent across-the-board pay raises, with up to 10 percent increases for some; new housing benefits, and more help with moving expenses.

Anti-terror spending totals about \$7 billion, up \$1 billion from 2001.

Bush won not only on his demand for a round of base closings, but full funding of his \$8.3 billion request for his prized missile defense plan, a \$3.1 billion increase over spending in 2001.

The Senate had authorized the full \$8.3 billion, while allowing \$1.3 billion of it to be used for

anti-terror efforts instead. The House had offered only \$7.9 billion. Conferees adopted the Senate's plan.

The negotiators agreed with the administration's request to cancel the January referendum in Vieques on future use of that Puerto Rican island for military training. Anti-Navy protest erupted there after off-target bombs killed a civilian guard in 1999. The Navy has used inert ammunition since then. Bush has promised to end the maneuvers by 2003.

The bill would prevent the Navy secretary from closing the facility until he certifies that a site or sites providing "equivalent or superior" levels of training will be available.

If the Vieques facilities are closed, the land would be transferred to the Interior Department.

Both the full House and Senate must pass the final version of the defense authorization bill before it can go to President Bush for his signature.

The Bush administration insists some bases must be closed, saying one-fifth to one-fourth of base structure is not needed, and closing excess facilities would save \$3.5 billion or so a year.

The 2005 date puts the next round into a new presidential term and two House elections away.

Lawmakers said that would provide the time needed to determine exactly what military force is needed to fight the new wars of the 21st century. And the conferees placed many requirements on the administration before it can call for the closings.

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A few targets precede Iraq

The forward deployment of U.S. Third Army headquarters to Kuwait marks the beginning of "Military Phase Two" in America's Millennial War.

Third Army, also referred to as ARCENT, is the U.S. Army ground-force component of Central Command.

The real estate agent's adage, "Location is everything," must come to mind. With a major U.S. headquarters in Kuwait, the obvious first, second and third thought is "on to Iraq."

But don't bet on it. Kuwait offers a politically secure, pro-American command site in a volatile region — at the moment that's the emirate's primary appeal.

Afghanistan isn't over. For that and other reasons, Somalia and eastern Yemen, two anarchic terror-havens, make more sense as near-term military and diplomatic targets. Certainly, Saddam Hussein's execrable regime is on America's hit list. It has to be, and credit Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz with having the spine to insist on it. Though Saddam's direct connections to al-Qaida remain murky, global terrorism has a home and hub in Baghdad. American diplomacy needs time to create the conditions for military action against Iraq. The Clinton administration's August 1996 disaster still cripples U.S. efforts. That's when Saddam used an inter-necine Kurd struggle to destroy the CIA-backed dissident base in northern Iraq. The Middle East is far too complex and



AUSTIN
BAY

Sept. 11 have helped erase doubts, solidifying Iraqi dissidents and configuring Kurd guerrillas as an anti-Saddam army aren't the only issues. Shaky sheiks, rattled by Osama bin Laden and other radical Islamists, are another time-demanding problem.

Yet U.S. successes in Afghanistan have produced political momentum. New information sources (particularly information gleaned from defecting Taliban and captured al-Qaida fighters) have increased what the spy crowd calls "the granularity" of American intelligence. In particular, the roots of al-Qaida's African and Arabian peninsula networks are showing. Western press sources report that other Somali groups are ready to rat out al-Ittihad al-Islamiya (Islamic Unity), an armed radical faction linked to bin Laden. Al-Qaida has other supporters in Somalia and is closely tied to Islamist leaders in the Somali "transitional government." The Somali Ra-

paradoxical a place to say one mistake or one provident act is a turning point. Yet the Gulf War political coalition truly began to fray in the wake of that U.S. failure to blunt Saddam's 1996 assault.

While U.S. actions since

hanwein Resistance Army (RRA, headquartered in the town of Baydhabo) has already offered troops as well as a base for U.S. operations against al-Qaida sites and support nodes in Somalia.

True, no hardcore Taliban-type group controls Somalia. Frankly, in Somalia, no one is in control. Clans, like gangs, control street corners and swaths of countryside. However, anarchy attracts terror cadres. U.S. diplomats note the rampant anarchy in Somalia means the country can't "be left to its own devices."

U.S. anti-terror operations in Somalia would leverage the political and military presence of opposition factions (like the RRA). However, the ability to use air bases under RRA control and the close proximity of the Indian Ocean (the U.S. Navy is just offshore) mean "quick strikes" from U.S. Army and Marine forces are a real option. The destruction of al-Qaida supporters and assets in Somalia and eastern Yemen would maintain the Afghan momentum. Kicking off operations in these areas sooner rather than later would re-emphasize the Bush administration's key point that this is a war against global terrorism, not simply a war with Osama bin Laden. Success in Somalia buys time to strengthen the anti-terror coalition and prepare for the showdown with Saddam.

Austin Bay's column is distributed by Creator's Syndicate.



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It's a 'YES' for Eisenhower

► Voters pass measure
by a 4 to 1 margin

By Tanla Ward
Staff Writer

With nearly an 81 percent majority,

Enid voters said "yes" to Eisenhower Elementary School improvements.

The final tally in the Tuesday election to extend a one-quarter percent sales tax was 3,451 in favor and 837 opposed. The measure received strong support in all sections of the city.

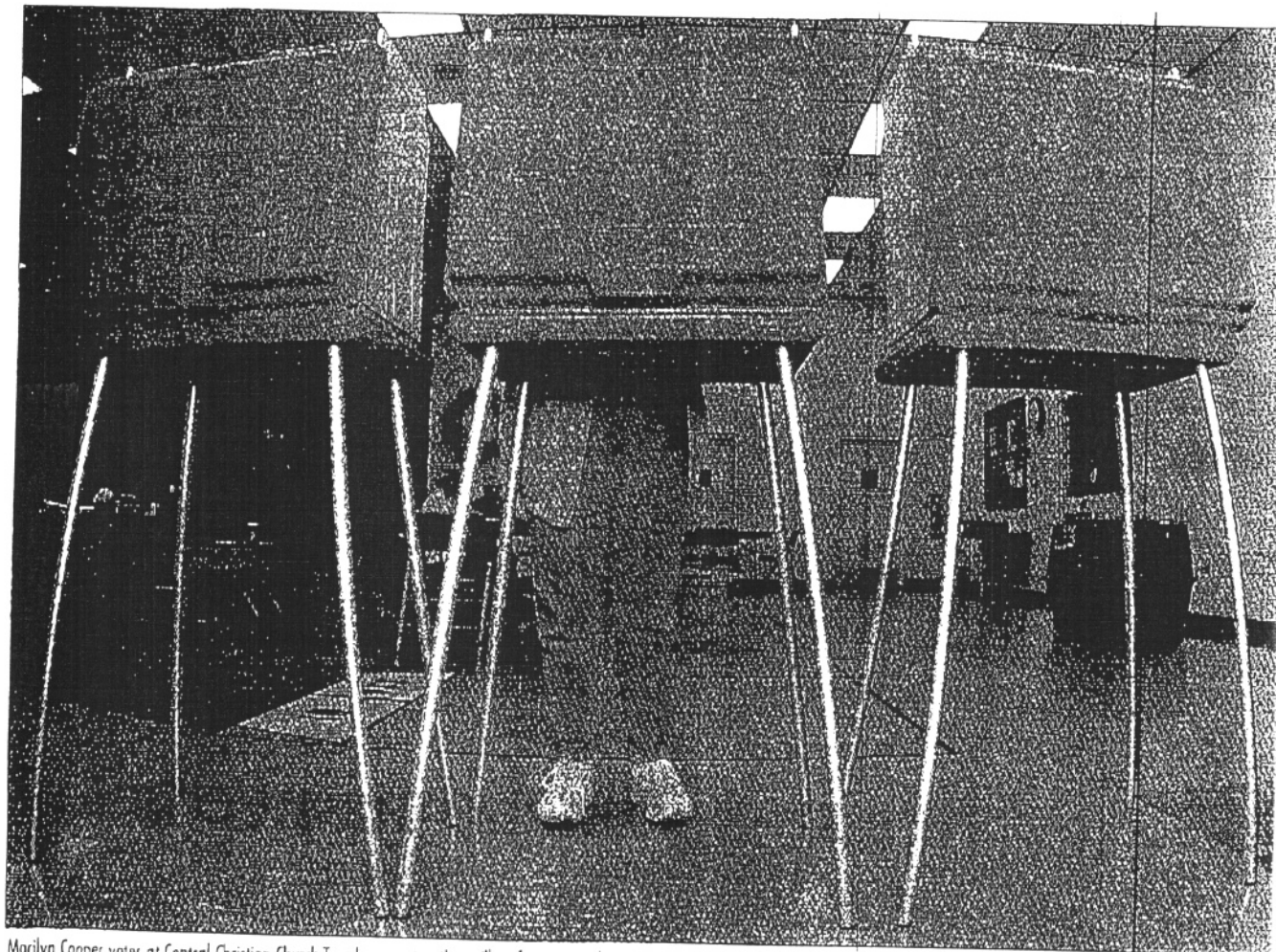
The tax, an extension of an existing sales tax, will raise \$700,000 over six to seven months beginning next spring.

Those funds, plus \$130,000 from the Public Schools, will expand and renovate the elementary school adjacent to the Air Force Base.

Improvements to the school include eliminating all eight free-standing portable classrooms and adding three classrooms, another restroom and a

See EISENHOWER, p. 4

A TAXING VOTE



Marilyn Cooper votes at Central Christian Church Tuesday on a tax that will go for structural improvements at Eisenhower Elementary. (Staff Photo by CHRIS LANDSBERGER)

EISENHOWER

Continued from Page A1

ous other improvements. Enid Public Schools will contribute an additional \$130,000 to the \$700,000 raised by the sales tax.

The excitement was undeniable in the voice of Karen Heizer, Eisenhower's principal.

"I wanted this to happen so bad for the children and for the community," she said.

"Watching the community come together has been really inspiring to me."

The condition of Eisenhower had been described as the last demerit left over from the Base Realignment and Closing reviews that were conducted in 1995. Nearly

160 students at Eisenhower Elementary attend class each day in one of the school's eight portable buildings, a black mark on the city of Enid and Vance Air Force Base, should base closures come around again, which they no doubt will, officials say, if not in 2003 than 2005.

Todd Earl, chairman of the "Yes Vance, Yes Schools, Yes Enid," campaign, said the success of the campaign, is reflected in the coordination of all the entities involved that were able to develop a common agenda for the community.

"I think the community really affirmed its commitment to Vance and to having a 21st century educational facility there next to Vance," he said.

Also, the vote is an affirmation that Enid is committed to see all its schools improved, Earl said.

John Blankenship, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Enid Chamber of Commerce, said Tuesday's vote was a great outcome for

Enid.

The community understood that Eisenhower needed improvements and this was the way to get it done, he said.

They were successful because there were so many dedicated individuals pushing for it, Blankenship said.

Superintendent Kem Keithly, said two major issues were decided with the vote Tuesday, an economic development issue and a quality of schools issue.

"It speaks well of our community and our community has always been supportive of issues that are critical," he said.

"It speaks well of our community and our community has always been supportive of issues that are critical."

— Kem Keithly

The next step, Keithly said, is getting the plans drawn up by the architect and sending the improvements out for bid in March of 2002.

Mike Cooper, with Vance Development Authority, said the vote of course assists Enid with its base protection effort, but it also says that if the city wants to be suc-

cessful in all its economic development endeavors, it has to begin with the schools.

"This is the first phase of a long range plan to do just that," he said.

To protect existing businesses and attract businesses to Enid, the condition of schools has to be improved all across the board, Cooper said, as better educational facilities and better quality of jobs for Enid go hand-in-hand.

The vote in favor of Eisenhower shows that the community understands that everybody wants what is best and where setting that foundation needs to begin.

"We have to have good schools," Cooper said.

Results of the Eisenhower t

Precinct	Polling Place	Yes	No
101	Grace Mennonite Church	165	48
102	Grace Mennonite Church	165	48
103	Davis Park Christian Church	169	71
104	University of the Sciences	169	71
107	Enid Health Center	61	33
108	Woodmen Park	176	49
201	Central Christian Church	176	49
202	Resbyterian Lutheran Church	176	49
203	New Hope United Methodist Church	136	46
204	Enid Technology Center	176	49
205	Faith American Lutheran Church	107	33
206	Enid Health Center	61	33
207	North Enid Town Hall	8	5
208	Enid Health Center	61	33
301	Meadows Point Apartments	273	35
302	Enid Health Center	61	33
303	Oakwood Christian Church	216	47
304	Enid Health Center	61	33
305	St. Gregory The Great Catholic Church	331	40
306	Enid Health Center	61	33
307	Golden Oaks Village Hobby Room	188	39
308	Enid Health Center	61	33
Absentee		125	26
Total		3,575	837

Group to meet day to eye issues help the military

What can the Oklahoma legislature do to prevent the closing of any Oklahoma military bases?

million for telecommunications infrastructure, a center for aircraft and systems support, lead institutional support and collaborative initiatives.

like Cooper, former Enid member and member of Vance Development Authority, is a chairman of the group. Enid businessman Bob Berry and Rep. Curt Roggow, R-Enid, are members of the task force. The group will discuss multi-

The task force is expected to approve a recommendation pertaining to job training, education and other expenditures related to job training and education in an effort to

base closings, possibly as early as 2003. The House version of the bill did not have such language. Differences were being worked out in a conference committee.

[illegible]

2005, these quality-of-life things need to be done," he said referring to Tuesday's sales tax vote on improvements at Eisenhower Elementary School, which is adjacent to Vance Air Force Base. Deficiencies at Eisenhower were pointed out in previous BRAC rounds. Voters approved the

Tuesday night by a large margin, 3,451 to 837.

Berry and Cooper will lead the discussion on quality-of-life issues, deemed to be more important in the next round of base closings.

"Quality-of-life issues" in Enid are renovation of Enid schools, getting medical providers to accept military In-Care insurance and upgrade and replacement of base housing of Vancie," Cooper said.

The U.S. Senate's defense funding "for housing opportunities for the appropriations bill included upgrades it Vance has been future. Prospects for another round of funding from 2004 back to 2003

Because of that, the communities or realigned, he said. Vancities adjacent to the bases and also could benefit from additional duties if it meets criteria part of the consideration, he said. A state task force is a good

Cooper does not expect idea, he said, because J. Tinker Air Force Base in involves the Oklahoma Legislature in assisting communities in keeping their bases considered for closure.

The only state assistance previously was given by Gov. David Walters from his discretionary funds to communities to help them pay for consultants on base closings. Enid received \$100,000.

Cooper also stressed the need to schedule the start of the new Vance central logistics area, one non-quality-of-life item to be addressed. Other Vance problems already have been reviewed, he said.

In the next BRAC round, Cooper said quality-of-life issues will become more important because all "bad" bases have been closed.

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Election results

Following are results from Tuesday's elections across Oklahoma. School bond issues require 60 percent approval to pass. Sales taxes and other local issues require a simple majority to pass.

COMANCHE COUNTY

MUNICIPAL

Medicine Park, ¼-cent sales tax for five years to be used to promote tourism, yes, 13 (26.5%); no, 36 (73.5%). Failed.

GARFIELD COUNTY

MUNICIPAL

Enid, continue a quarter-cent sales tax for seven months to fund \$700,000 in improvements at Eisenhower Elementary School, yes, 3,451 (80.5%); no, 837 (19.5%). Passed.

GRADY COUNTY

MUNICIPAL

Chickasha, a ¼-cent sales tax for 10 years beginning Jan. 31, 2004, to be used for the city's infrastructure needs, yes, 744 (75.6%); no, 240 (24.4%). Passed.

HUGHES COUNTY

COUNTY

Dist. 1 commissioner, Charles Skipworth: D, 232 (50.3%); Charles Adkison, R, 229 (49.7%).

KAY COUNTY

MUNICIPAL

Blackwell, half-cent sales tax for 10 years for improvements to Memorial Park swimming pool and the park system, yes, 841 (88.8%); no, 382 (31.2%). Passed.

McCLAIN COUNTY

SCHOOL

Dibble, \$300,000 bond for an early childhood center, heating and air-conditioning improvements, yes, 79 (61.7%); no, 49 (38.2%). Passed.

OKLAHOMA COUNTY

SCHOOL

Edmond, Prop. 1, \$16.6 million bond for elementary school gymnasium, classrooms, computer equipment and other improvements, yes, 1,589 (79.2%); no, 417 (20.8%). Passed. Prop. 2, \$900,000 bond for 16 buses, yes, 1,603 (79.9%); no, 403 (20.1%). Passed.

Midwest City-Del City, \$5.65 million bond for remodeling, maintenance, equipment and technology improvements, yes, 2,052 (78.5%); no, 631 (23.5%). Passed.

PAYNE COUNTY

MUNICIPAL

Perkins, Prop. 1, use of municipal capital improvement fund for the library, yes, 142 (81.1%); no, 33 (18.9%). Passed. Prop. 2, allocation of \$230,000 for the library's renovation and expansion, yes, 143 (80.8%); no, 34 (19.2%). Passed.

Voters in Enid OK school renovation

Sales tax, school bonds approved in other cities

From Staff Reports

Voters across the state approved several municipal and school projects in Tuesday's election.

Enid voters approved extending a ¼-cent sales tax that will raise \$700,000 for renovating Eisenhower Elementary School, which is near Vance Air Force Base. The tax will be in place for seven months.

The school primarily serves children of military personnel stationed at the base.

The plan passed with 80.5 percent of the vote, with 3,451 voting for it and 837 voting against.

Chickasha voters passed a 10-year, ¾-cent sales tax for infrastructure needs by a 75 percent margin while Blackwell voters approved a ½-cent sales tax that will be used for pool and park improvements. The plan carried by an 841-382 margin, with 68.8 percent voting for it.

Perkins voters passed a \$230,000 plan to renovate and expand the city's library. The two-part plan passed with more

than 80 percent of those going to the polls voting yes.

In other elections Tuesday:

• Edmond School District voters passed a two-part, \$17.5 million bond issue. Proposition 1, for \$16.6 million, carried 1,589 (79.2 percent) to 417 (20.8 percent), and Proposition 2, for \$900,000, won 1,603 (79.9 percent) to 403 (20.1 percent).

The bonds will pay for school buildings, athletic program improvements, upgrades to the district's technology plan, additional buses for the transportation department and upgrades to the district's school safety plan.

• In the Midwest City-Del City School District, a \$5.65 million school bond package sailed to approval 2,052 (79.9 percent) to 631 (23.5 percent).

The money will pay for remodeling, maintenance projects, technology improvements and music, fine arts and athletic equipment purchases.

• Dibble School District voters approved a \$300,000 bond issue. The vote was 79 yes (61.7 percent) to 49 no (38.2 percent).

Most of the money would be used to complete, furnish and equip an early childhood center for prekindergarten and kindergarten, to be built across from the elementary school.

Robert Burns

Associated Press

Web Posted: 12/12/2001 01:25:40 PM

An Air Force B-1B bomber involved in the war in Afghanistan went down in the Indian Ocean today and all four crew members were rescued, Pentagon officials said.

The crew members were taken aboard a U.S. Navy destroyer that was sent to the crash site, according to Lt. Cmdr. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman. There was no immediate word on their condition.

The bomber was the first fixed-wing U.S. warplane to go down since the war began Oct. 7. Officials said it was not immediately clear whether the B1-B was returning from a mission over Afghanistan or leaving for a mission.

An Air Force KC-10 refueling tanker flew to the B1-B crash site and established voice contact with at least one member of the bomber crew, according to a statement by U.S. Central Command, which is overseeing combat operations in Afghanistan. The KC-10 crew saw a strobe light blinking at the crash sight.

The crash occurred at 11:30 a.m. Eastern time.

There was no indication of the cause, Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clarke said.

The bomber went down about 30 miles north of Diego Garcia, a British island that the United States is using to base B-1B and B-52 bombers flying long-range combat missions over Afghanistan.

"There are no known casualties. Rescue efforts are under way," Clarke said in a press conference with Gen. Peter Pace, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Pace said no other information was immediately available. He said it was possible for crew members to eject from a B-1B, but he did not know what happened in this case.

"This underscores what we try to remember all the time — that the men and women in the U.S. military put their lives at risk every single day," Clarke said. "And we're grateful."

Diego Garcia is in the central Indian Ocean.

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